

Page A2—The Times-Independent—Thursday, June 18, 1998

## Fire Department calls for tax increase to cover expenses

The Moab Valley Fire Protection District will seek voter approval of a 600 percent property tax increase to help fund department activities and expenses through the year. The proposed increase will affect

sectors in precincts 1 through 5, 10 and 11. Moab Valley Fire Chief Clay Brewer said the money will be used to purchase and upgrade equipment, including firefighting trucks and

protective coats and pants, car accident extrication tools ("Jaws of Life"), and capital purchases, such as the placement of brush fire trucks when needed. The tax is estimated to cost the individual taxpayer who owns

property within the fire protection district \$5.50 a year for a home valued at \$100,000, and \$10 a year for a business valued at \$100,000. The district would receive additional and due in November 1998. "If this relatively

small increase is not approved now, a significantly larger increase or bond election will have to be called for in the future," Brewer said. "The Moab Valley Fire Protection District Commissioners expect that this level of

taxation should be adequate for at least the next five years." A public hearing on the fire district's budget was held in Moab last December, during which commissioners passed an increase of \$35,000 to cover expected expenses in the future. In early 1998, the Utah Legislature placed a moratorium on tax increases statewide, requiring an election to

## County will allow district to move ahead with north side sewer system

by Ken Davey  
staff writer  
The Grand County Council, by a 5-1 vote, approved a plan allowing the Arches Village Special Services District to pursue funding to build a water and sewer system to service existing businesses and anticipated development north of Moab City limits.

In favor of the proposal were Ken Ballantyne, Bart Leavitt, Dale Muller, Frank Nelson and Harvey Merrill. Opposed was Al McLeod.

The district board says property owners in the area will shoulder the financial cost through a property tax. But as of now the district has no taxing power. Any increase in property tax must be approved by a vote of residents within the district.

Drinking water will come from springs located at the north end of Moab Valley. The sewer plant would

have a capacity of 750,000 gallons per day, or about half the capacity of the newly expanded Moab treatment plant. At a meeting two weeks ago, district board members said they believed they could construct both the water and sewer systems for about \$1 million.

Mark Arnold, identified as the attorney for the Arches Village district, said the county council that the district believes it can get the bill selling with an affirmative vote by the council. "The board unanimously recommended that you vote by resolution, or some sort of vote, to encourage and/or allow us to go forward on the financing of both a water system and a sanitary sewer system," he stated.

Strongly supporting the proposal was Bart Leavitt. "That's what we set the district up for, was to pursue avenues to sup-

ply that area with water and sewer," stated Leavitt. He added that the district looked at both hooking up to the city system and building a system themselves. "Now we just have to get on with our own."

But city officials say the district made only cursory efforts to work with the city. Last year the district asked for an estimate from the city on how much it would cost to hook up. The city responded that they need to know how much water and sewer capacity the district expects to use, and according to City Manager Dennis Metzler, the district never came back with the necessary figures.

Archer National Park, with 1998 estimates expected to empty close to 900,000 people, is a possible client for the new district. According to Park Service official Phil Brown, Arches wants to get off its antiquated septic systems, and is interested in either the new district plan or working with the city.

The state water against the proposal was Al McLeod. "You guys have had this special service district for 18 months. You still don't have a budget, you still haven't unified the taxpayers out there that they are going to get assessed to pay for it. You don't have funding information, and you're not even sure you're Arches (National Park) is still going to be part of your district. So I'm not going along with it."

But Mark Arnold and Arches Village district chairman Nate Knight both said they felt they could not move forward with specific plans on how to finance the project without the approval of the County Council.

Bob Greenberg, supervisor of the Moab office of Four Corners Mental Health, said, "It's really like a duck and looks like a duck, then it's a duck. I see a lot more people strong out on north than people with shiny teeth." He didn't think the virus was being spread by sharing toothbrushes.

Chauhanha expressed concern that the outbreak was related to the rise in the number of people sharing teeth. He did say, "The first transmission was via IV drug use." That's how it first started in Moab. He also said, "at least one case was not transmitted via IV drug use."

Other health professionals were reluctant to make definitive statements about the connection between the hepatitis outbreak and IV drug use. One reason given was that they don't want to break professional confidentiality. And even speaking about groups of anonymous people presents problems in a small town like Moab.

And there's another reason. Unless a completed DNA analysis is done on samples from the infected individuals, any connections between the outbreak and IV drug use are only circumstantial.

City Council members expressed surprise that benefits for city employees are costing more than ever and going up. In the past the city estimated that benefits would, on average, equal about one-third of salaries, or \$32 for every \$100 in wages. But according to Metzler, the average now is closer to 50 percent. That means for every \$100 now paid out in salaries, an additional \$50 goes to benefits.

The council made a number of other changes, including shifting delayed 1997-98 projects to next year, and transferring depreciation funds into surplus funds.

And the council discussed and acted on comments made at both the budget hearing three weeks ago and in a recent meeting with the county council that the recreation program appears to be spending too much on administration.




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
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